



# NEWS

Mercer Island School District

Volume 10 Issue #1, Fall 2008

This is the first issue of District NEWS for 2008-2009, designed to present information on the new 2020 Vision, district and school improvement planning and other programs. Please continue to check the district web site for the most current information. [www.misd.k12.wa.us](http://www.misd.k12.wa.us)

## Mercer Island School District's 2020 Vision:

Successfully preparing students for the cognitive, global and digital world

On August 7, 2008, the Mercer Island School District's Board of Directors approved the district's new 2020 Vision, the culmination of 18 months of in-depth conversations, community meetings and presentations, including visits from futurists Daniel Pink and Dr. Yong Zhao. The process began with the Mercer Island Schools Foundation request for a "Really Big Idea" to encourage both transformative thinking and fundraising in the district. The school board adopted the big idea effort when it became apparent that the results would become a bold new direction for the district, affecting teaching and learning for many years into the future.



**The number "2020" is as much about clarity of vision as it is about preparing our students for their future.**

## Superintendent Gary Plano presents the new vision

Since the start of school in September, Superintendent Gary Plano has been "on the road" with a PowerPoint presentation and handouts, sharing the 2020 Vision with teachers, parents, students and community members. "Because of the wonderful efforts of teachers and students, we continue to perform well on standardized measures of learning. As a result of that success, we can now branch out and think about learning in new and different ways," says Plano.



The number 2020 in the vision was selected to convey the need for a clarity of purpose as we prepare our students for their future success. 2020 also reminds us of the year our first graders will graduate. Successfully preparing students for 21st Century living and success requires them to be critical thinkers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and inventors. Today's jobs require students to use cooperative learning and have the ability to synthesize ideas. Our curriculum needs to be dynamic, flexible and personalized. We want students to set ambitious academic and personal goals for their future.

Dr. Plano's presentation emphasizes that we continue to teach to standards in Mercer Island. "The difference is that now we are focusing on 21st Century thinking and process skills, including critical and cross discipline thinking, creativity, innovation, communication, problem solving, and information and technology literacy. We are already doing much of this in our schools, but there is more we can and will do. It is a very exciting time for our students and teachers."

**Inside:** See how the 2020 Vision is affecting students at Island Park, Lakeridge, West Mercer, IMS and MIHS!

# 2020 Vision:

## Stories of Teaching and Learning from our Classrooms

### Mercer Island High School marketing class launches – *The Mercer Trading Company*

MIHS students are collaborating with Saint Augustine's College in Ghana to set up an online trading company to buy and sell goods from the United States and Ghana. "We have been searching for global experiences for students," said Marketing teacher Carol Wiseley. "Achievers International in London offers a unique program for high school students, and we are the first to pilot this on the west coast." Wiseley's students have formed a corporation, sold stock (they each purchased 4 shares at \$5 each), written a mission statement and by-laws and split the company into departments. "We had a choice between 5 or 6 countries to trade with," said President and CEO Julie Bell. "We chose Ghana because we wanted to learn more about Africa and give our proceeds back to the people there. Right now the United States does not import goods from Ghana. Maybe we will be the first!" Stay tuned for more to come from this enterprising group of students.



*Members of Carol Wiseley's Marketing class: The Mercer Trading Company collaborates with students in Ghana.*

### Islander Middle School students create comic strips to learn Russian history

A common lesson plan in 8th grade language arts and social studies classes is to study the Russian revolution alongside George Orwell's Animal Farm. In a traditional classroom, the teacher might lecture the students, assign reading, have them write an essay and take a test. But students in Patri Collin's class at Islander explored another approach to learning with a software program called "Comic Life." Students were asked to create a

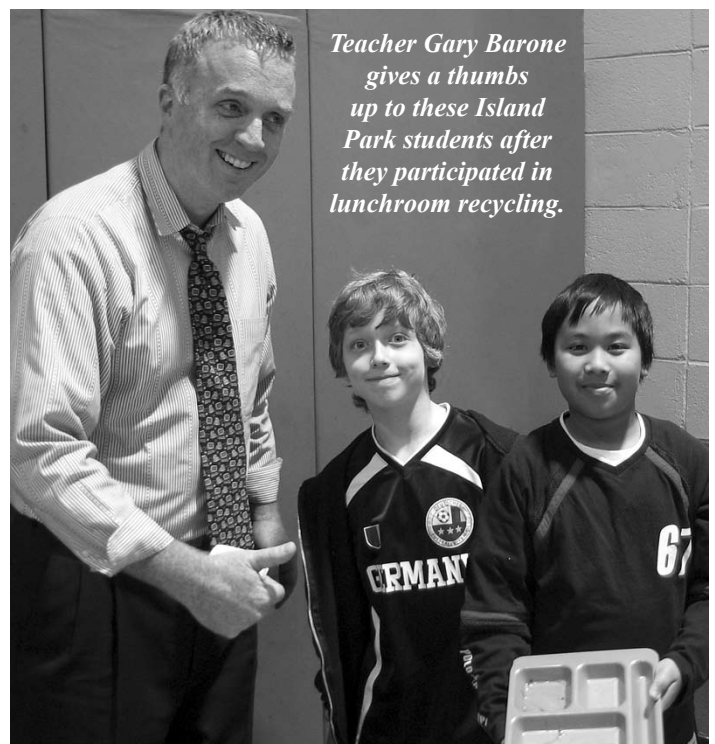
"graphic novel" with at least eight dates between 1917 to 1945, find images of events and write "thought bubbles" to explain what it is. Every piece of information from the Russian revolution had to be matched with something from Animal Farm. Working in the computer lab, students were able to download images and write the "bubbles" from their class notes and research. According to one student, "Mr. Collins is really interesting to listen to, but I like this because it is interactive – we get to do things rather than just sit and listen."



*This student in Patri Collin's class uses the software program Comic Life to create her graphic novel about Russian history.*

### Island Park students are leaders in the composting movement

Last year Island Park's Student Council worked with 5th grade teacher Gary Barone and Mercer Island Recycling Center founder Harry Leavitt to help their fellow students learn how to save the earth through composting. This year, they have taken the project to a new level through a partnership with Cedar Grove Recycling, a commercial enterprise that makes compost from food and garden waste. The school committed ASB funds to rent the composting bin from Cedar Grove, which picks up waste every week. "We have found that our success is directly related to education on the front end," said Susan Thoman, Marketing Director for Cedar Grove. "There's something about a 3rd grader teaching a 5th grader that is way more powerful than anything we adults could do."



*Teacher Gary Barone gives a thumbs up to these Island Park students after they participated in lunchroom recycling.*

## Lakeridge 1st graders visit the high school's jewelry class, without leaving their classroom

A typical beginning art lesson for 1st graders in Kara Millsap's class at Lakeridge Elementary includes learning about "wavy and curly lines." One of the first assignments for the year for high school students in Cyndy Jensen's Jewelry class is to make a copper pin. Thanks to *Voice Thread* technology and a new web site called "Artsonia," the two classes were able to combine their lessons for a unique experience in cross-age learning, without leaving their classrooms. "My students drew a picture of their favorite animal," said Kara Millsap, "and then we sent them through district mail to the high school students." The culmination of the project was sharing the experience via *Voice Thread*, technology that allows students to post group conversations around images, video, and documents online. "We sent the finished pieces to the children," explained Cyndy Jensen, "and then uploaded the images of their artwork next to the pins to the *Voice Thread* website and connected to their classroom to share our experiences." Through Artsonia, the students are able to build up a web-based art portfolio to share their work with family and friends. "My students loved the live conversations with the high school students," said Millsap. "And my students took special care with their pins," said Jensen. "They wanted the first graders to see their drawings come to life."



*One of Kara Millsap's 1st graders records his thanks to the high school student in Cyndy Jensen's Jewelry class who made a copper pin based on the 1st grader's design.*

## Marketplace at West Mercer – Adventures in real life business

Marketplace Day at West Mercer Elementary is just the place if you are looking for the perfect gift. On November 7, students in Mark Headlee, Chris Cocklin Ray, David Baxter and Denise Di Prima's classrooms set up booths selling everything from reusable bags, all sorts of delicious baked goods, to birdfeeders, custom holiday stockings, "eco-bookmarks" and more. Each item was homemade with no more than \$10 in supplies, to be paid back in community service hours to each student's family.

These 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students were required to write a business plan, expository paragraph with illustrations, a colorful sign for their booth and the product itself. Each business required a detailed accounting sheet to track sales, and every sheet had to balance down to the penny. According to Mark Headlee, "Experiences like these allow students to seek knowledge on their own. We (the teachers) provide the framework for discovery, and then the students explore the many different options for solving a problem."



*An exciting culmination to learning about business plans and product marketing: This West Mercer student sells his wares to other students, teachers, and parents on Marketplace Day.*

## School Board suspends the "Ends" to focus on the future

The school board has modified their board governance model to allow for a more forward-looking view. According to President Pat Braman, "The whole process of monitoring the Board "Ends" required us to look backwards, when we want to look ahead. We are committed to remaining at the policy level, but we aren't sure how monitoring works with the 2020 Vision. Therefore, we are suspending the "Ends" for this year, so we can all focus on the future."

## District NEWS on-line

The most current district news and information is available on the district web site at [www.misd.k12.wa.us](http://www.misd.k12.wa.us). Superintendent Plano sends out a bi-weekly "E-Connections" featuring stories from the classroom and a link to his Superintendent's Message and Questions & Answers page.

## \$10,000 grant for Multicultural Scholars Program

The Norcliffe Foundation of Seattle has approved a grant for \$10,000 to support the 2008-2009 Multicultural Scholars Program. Now in its 4th year, The Multicultural Scholars Programs offers 10 students from Mercer Island (suburban) and 10 students from Franklin High School (inner city) a unique year-long project.

The students learn about Seattle and National Civil Rights history in a month of Saturday classes, take anti-bias training, and learn about each other.

In June after school is out, they travel the South for 10 days of oral history with civil rights leaders in Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi. The Norcliffe Foundation grant supports scholarships for students to participate in this extraordinary field trip.

## MISF raises \$418,000!

The MISF raised a record \$418,000 in their annual Phone-a-thon, \$5,000 more than last year. The Foundation hopes to raise a total of \$732,644 to support curriculum and instruction, enrichment grants and teacher training throughout the district. Save the date for their next big fund-raiser: The Breakfast of Champions, April 28, 2009 at Mercer Island High School.

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## Congratulations!

- Mercer Island High School's Kim Schjelderup has been named one of the 2008 University of Washington Computer Science & Engineering Department's Inspirational Teachers.
- Jamie Cooke, Mercer Island High School Biology and Bioethics teacher, was featured in the October issue of Science Magazine: "Students Learn How, Not What To Think About Difficult Issues."

### Mercer Island School District Board of Directors

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